



Ms Jane Bransby  
Secretary to the Casino Advisory Panel  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
Casino Advisory Panel  
2-4 Cockspur Street  
London  
SW1Y 5DH

Our Reference: E1

Your Reference:

8<sup>th</sup> December 2005

Dear Ms Bransby

Thank you for your letter of the 11<sup>th</sup> November, offering the Assembly an opportunity to provide initial thoughts about possible Local Authority areas which may be suitable for new casinos.

As you may be aware the North West Regional Assembly is currently preparing a draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which is due to be submitted to the Government in January 2006. In light of previous guidance issued by DCMS and ODPM we have been keen to include a policy within the draft RSS to provide guidance on suitable broad locations. This approach has focused on broad locations for regional casinos.

The North West has seen particularly strong interest in the development of regional casinos driven initially by the development of the Blackpool Masterplan, which has placed significant emphasis on the potential role of regional casinos as a response to the difficult economic and social circumstances in the resort and the call for innovative solutions in the 'Sea Changes' report published in 2001. Blackpool Borough Council has been actively involved in the debate on the Gambling Bill, including giving evidence to the Joint Committee on the Draft Gambling Bill chaired by Mr John Greenwood. As the Bill progressed other casino interests in the region were made known, giving rise to potential competition between locations.

It was within this context that the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) commissioned, in partnership with the Assembly and Government Office North West, a research study into the market demand for casinos in the North West<sup>1</sup>, to provide an independent assessment of demand and capacity for regional casinos in the North West. This work was completed in June 2005. As part of this work those Local Authorities and casino operators with an interest were invited to contact the appointed consultants. Through this process it was determined that the main interests for the development of regional casinos in the North West were located in Manchester, Trafford, Salford, Blackpool and Liverpool. In addition interests for large casinos were registered for St Helens, Southport, Manchester and Blackpool.

The conclusions of the research were that;

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<sup>1</sup> Casinos in England's Northwest: An Assessment of Market Demand, Pion Economics, June 2005

- If economic, tourism and regeneration benefits are weighted equally Manchester and Blackpool are ranked equally, with Liverpool in third position, Trafford and finally Salford.
- Both Manchester and Blackpool can provide a rationale for development on regeneration grounds, however when considered in the context of the wider economy it is difficult not to assign a higher priority to Blackpool given that the local economy is less buoyant and less diverse.

I enclose a copy of the final report for your information.

Following the completion of the study the Northwest Regional Development Agency Board determined in July to:

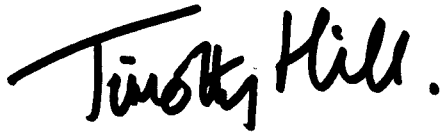
- Support Blackpool as the Northwest's preferred location for the regional casino pilot
- Consider supporting other candidate locations should the Government introduce secondary legislation to increase the number of regional casinos.

I would encourage you to consult the NWDA, to whom I have copied this response.

On this basis the Assembly has prepared a policy for inclusion in the draft RSS which reflects this position, and the 15 – 20 year timescale of RSS. It identifies Blackpool, Manchester and Liverpool as suitable broad locations for the development of regional casinos, with priority assigned to Blackpool. The current draft of the policy is attached for your information. I would however highlight that at this stage the approach reflected in the draft policy has not been formally approved by the Assembly. The full Assembly is due to consider this approach, within the context of the full draft RSS, on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

I trust you will find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy Hill." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim Hill  
Director of Planning, Transport, Housing and Sustainability

cc. Nick Gerrard, Head of Strategy and Policy, NWDA  
Janet Matthewman, Culture, Media and Sport Manager, GONW  
Steve Fyfe, Head of Local Planning Team, GONW

**Extract from The North West Plan: Interim Draft Revisions to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England, October 2005**

**Policy W6 - Regional Casinos**

**Plans and strategies should reflect Blackpool's position as the priority location for regional casino<sup>2</sup> development in the North West, and should not promote other regional casino proposals or schemes in other parts of the North West, pending the implementation of a regional casino in Blackpool.**

**To maximise regeneration and other relevant benefits, the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool are identified as the broad locations for subsequent regional casino development.**

8.26 Casino development in other locations should only take place when casino development in Blackpool has been completed and is operating at a viable level.

8.27 Research<sup>3</sup> commissioned by the Northwest Regional Development Agency has explored the market demand for regional casinos in the North West and the generic and specific associated economic, tourism and regeneration benefits of regional casinos.

8.28 Research has identified Blackpool as the priority location for a Regional Casino. Weighting economic, tourism and regeneration<sup>4</sup> benefits equally resulted in Manchester and Blackpool were ranked equally, with Liverpool in third position. However taking into account the buoyancy and diversity of the economic base and GVA performance of the local economy there is a strong case for according priority to Blackpool. The location of regional casinos in Blackpool will be a critical element of Blackpool's regeneration and will support the focus on developing Blackpool as an entertainment centre.

8.29 The regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool have more diverse local economies in which Regional Casinos have a role to play. However that role is likely to be part of a wider strategy for growth and development.

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<sup>2</sup> **Regional casinos** - will require a minimum area exclusively for casino table games of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>, and a minimum additional gambling area of 2,500m<sup>2</sup>. Regional casinos will also require a minimum non-gambling area available to customers of 1,500m<sup>2</sup>. They will be permitted twenty five gaming machines (of up to category A) for each gaming table available for play, up to a maximum of 1,250, and will also be permitted to provide betting and bingo (Gambling Act: Regulatory Impact Assessment, April 2005, DCMS)

<sup>3</sup> Casinos in England's Northwest: An Assessment of Market Demand, June 2005, Pion Economics for NWDA

<sup>4</sup> In terms of benefits to groups from deprived communities based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation